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Haiti 'Invasion' Crushed

MARATHON, Fla., Jan. 3 (UPI)

LEADERS

Federal officers and local police swooped down on a beach house last night to break up a planned invasion by exiled Cubans, Haitians and American soldiers of fortune bent on overthrowing Haiti President Francois (Papa Doc) Duvalier.

Authorities said about 120 men and a woman quartermaster, led by an exiled Catholic priest dressed in khaki, were preparing to shove off to Haiti from an inlet at Coca Plum Beach in the Florida Keys, about 110 miles south of Miami.

Customs agents seized an old fishing boat, and an arsenal of machine guns, some as large as 50 caliber, homemade bombs, rifles and other weapons, 120,000 rounds of ammunition and three tons of explosives. They also looked for an "air force" of five planes the would-be invaders claimed to have and a "navy" of two other vessels.

Customs agents arrested 21 of the men and rushed them to the Monroe County jail at Key West, 51 miles away, where they were undergoing fingerprinting and questioning early today.

They were arrested after an ugly confrontation that at least one officer feared would turn into a riot.

It was a strange sight in the moonlight when the officers and invasion force, both armed with machine guns, confronted each other. Cubans and Haitians waved their arms and milled around for more than an hour.

Many of those in the group were veterans of the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion of 1961.

The group was led by Haitian exile priest Father Jean Baptiste Georges, 44, and Cuban exile leader Rolando Masferrer, a former senator and Havana newspaper publisher.

Mr. Masferrer said the plans were to overthrow the Duvalier dictatorship and then set up a base in Haiti for Cuban exiles to attack the Fidel Castro regime.

The military commander of the expedition was Haitian exile Col. Rene Leon, a graduate of special guerilla training by the U.S. Army.

Mr. Masferrer, who described himself "a humble adviser," said the invasion force was originally scheduled to go around Thanksgiving Day but was cancelled because "we were infiltrated by U.S. Customs agents."

The group occupied the two-story beachside house about four days ago and turned it into an armory and arsenal. The house was cluttered with homemade bombs, mines, rifles, explosives, mortars and a wide assortment of other weapons.

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